

**Amendments to the Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for use in facilitating access with a distributed network, the apparatus comprising:

a plurality of persistent connections to between the apparatus and one or more servers in a network; and

~~a controller that controls communications over the persistent connections;~~

communication ports coupled with the persistent connections, where at least one of the communication ports receive requests for objects from users wherein the objects are from the one or more servers;

wherein the controller communicates over the persistent connections and allocates the requests ~~are communicated over to~~ the plurality of persistent connections ~~and for transmission to the one or more servers, receives~~ the requested objects ~~are received~~ over the plurality of persistent connections, and ~~at least two of the requests are received from two different users and are communicated over the same persistent connection~~ orders delivery of the objects received from the one or more serves to the users.

2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller dynamically adjusts the number of persistent connections between the apparatus and a first server of the one or more servers in the network.

3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 2, further comprising:  
an idle timer coupled with the controller, wherein the controller activates the idle timer when a first persistent connection becomes idle, and terminates the first persistent connection when a predefined time period expires before a request for an object is ~~communicated~~ allocated over the first persistent connections.

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the controller activates an additional persistent connection when an additional request is received for a second server of the one or more servers and the existing plurality of one or more

persistent connections are ~~in use~~ not idle, and ~~routes~~ allocates the additional request ~~over~~ to the additional persistent connection for transmission to the second server.

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein more than one persistent connection between the apparatus and a third server of the one or more servers exists, and the controller distributes allocates the requests ~~to be communicated over the plurality of~~ for the third server to one or more persistent connections persistent connections to the third server such that the requests are ~~outed to~~ transmitted to the third server over the persistent connections having lightest loads.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:  
a cache coupled with the communication ports, wherein a first received object is stored in the cache when a first request associated with the first object has a lower priority than a second request for a second object that has not been received.

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:  
a load tracker coupled with at least one of the communication ports, where the load tracker identifies which of the plurality of persistent connections to a fourth server has a lightest load when more than one persistent connection exists between the apparatus and the fourth server, wherein the controller communicates with the load tracker and ~~routes~~ allocates a request ~~for an object for transmission to the fourth server~~ over a persistent connection having the lightest load according to the load tracker.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the controller tracks priorities of the received requests and delivers the objects to the requesting user in the order of the priority.

9. (Currently Amended) A system for use in communicating data with devices, the system comprising:

a proxy comprising:

a controller providing at least some control of the proxy; and

a memory coupled with the controller, the memory comprises a cache that stores data; and

~~a load tracker coupled with the controller, the load tracker provides load information to the controller; and~~

a plurality of persistent connections coupled with the proxy, where the plurality of persistent connections are connections between the proxy and one or more servers over a distributed network that are activated and maintained by the proxy, and

a load tracker coupled with the controller, wherein the load tracker provides information to the controller on the load on the persistent connections.

10. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9, wherein the proxy further comprises:

a persistent connection controller coupled with an idle timer, wherein the idle timer determines a period of time for which a first persistent connection to a first server of the one or more servers is idle, and the persistent connection controller releases the first persistent connection when the first persistent connection is idle for a predefined period of time.

11. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9, wherein the proxy further comprises a persistent connection controller coupled with the plurality of persistent connections such that when an additional request is received for an object on a second server to which there is one or more persistent connections, the persistent connection controller determines whether one or more of the persistent connections to the second server is idle and activates an additional persistent connection ~~when an additional request is received while none of the existing persistent connections are idle~~ to the second server when no existing persistent connections to the second server are idle.

12. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9, wherein the proxy further comprises:

an object identification evaluator coupled with the controller, the object identification evaluator identifies a user associated with a received object and a priority associated with the object; and

~~an a priority-based~~ object router coupled with the object identification evaluator, where the object router routes the received object to the user as identified by the object identification evaluator based on the priority of the object as identified by the objection identification evaluator.

13. (Currently Amended) A method for use in providing client devices with access to a distributed network, the method comprising:

establishing a plurality of persistent connections ~~to servers~~ between a proxy and a first server over a distributed network;

maintaining the plurality of persistent connections as active;

receiving a plurality of requests for objects on the first server; ~~and~~

communicating the plurality of requests over the plurality of persistent connections; ~~and where a first request and a second request are communicated over a first persistent connection~~

adjusting a number of persistent connections that are maintained as active to the first server.

14-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 45 ~~13~~, further comprising:

monitoring a ~~second~~ first persistent connection of the plurality of persistent connections; and

releasing the ~~second~~ first persistent connection when the ~~second~~ first persistent connection is idle for a predefined period of time.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising:

receiving an additional request for an object on the first server;

determining loading on each of the existing persistent connections to the first server when there are one or more persistent connections to the first server;  
determining when existing persistent connections to the first server are loaded beyond a threshold limit when receiving the additional request  
activating an additional persistent connection ~~when the additional request is received while~~ all of the existing persistent connections are loaded beyond a threshold limit; and  
~~routing~~ communicating the additional request to the first server over the additional persistent connection.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising:  
receiving a first object from the first server;  
determining that a third request is associated with the received first object; and  
caching the first object ~~until~~ when there is a fourth request for an object on the first server having a higher priority than the third request such that a second object is received that is associated with [[a]] the fourth request having a higher priority than the third request has not been received from the first server and delivering the first object with cached objects associated with requests having a lower priority than the third request when there are no requests with higher priority than the third request for which the objects have not been received.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising:  
receiving a third request for an object on the first server when one or more persistent connections are available to the first server;  
determining when one or more of the plurality of active persistent connections is to the first server idle; and  
~~routing~~ communicating the third request to the first server over an idle persistent connection when one or more of the plurality of active persistent connections is idle.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising:  
receiving an additional request for an object on the first server when one or more persistent connections exist to the first server;  
determining which of the one or more of plurality of persistent connections has the lightest load; and  
~~routing~~ communicating the additional request to the first server over [[a]] the persistent connection that has been determined to have with the lightest load.